

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-06 AID-01 /036 W
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R 191713Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5326
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OREP (CODEL SPARKMAN)
SUBJECT: VISIT OF SEVEN MEMBERS OF SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS
COMMITTEE

1. SENATORS SPARKMAN, CHURCH, PELL, SARBANES, CASE, JAVITS
AND PERCY VISITED PANAMA FOR NEARLY TWO DAYS OF INTENSE AC-
TIVITIES JANUARY 17-18. THE VISIT HAD TO BE ABBREVIATED
BECAUSE OF FUNERAL SERVICES FOR SENATOR HUMPHREY, BUT THE
SENATORS SAW AND DID JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING WHICH SUCH GROUPS
USUALLY SEE AND DO IN THREE DAYS. THEY HAD BRIEFINGS FROM
THE EMBASSY, THE SOUTHERN COMMAND AND THE PANAMA CANAL
COMPANY. THEY OVERFLEW THE CANAL. THEY WERE GIVEN A DINNER
BY PRESIDENT LAKAS AND A LUNCH WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS--AND
JOHN WAYNE (WHO REPEATED HIS ENDORSEMENT OF THE TREATIES).
THEY TALKED WITH U.S. BUSINESSMEN, CANAL ZONE RESIDENTS
AND LABOR LEADERS, ARCHBISHOP MCGRATH AND OTHER RELIGIOUS
LEADERS, FOUR DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES OR MOVEMENTS, AND
MINISTER OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC POLICY NICOLAS ARDITO
BARLETTA. IN ADDITION, THERE WAS SPECIAL PROGRAMMING
FOR SOME OF THE SENATORS. (E.G., SENATOR PELL MET
WITH SMITHSONIAN OFFICIALS.) BUT THE FOCAL POINT OF
THE VISIT WAS THE SENATORS' TWO-HOUR MEETING WITH
GENERAL TORRIJOS.

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2. THE MEETING TOOK PLACE ON CONTADORA ISLAND, NEAR
PANAMA CITY. THE SUBJECT WHICH TOOK UP THE GREATEST
AMOUNT OF TIME WAS ALTERATION OF THE TREATY TO MAKE
IT MORE ACCEPTABLE POLITICALLY IN THE U.S., WITHOUT
ENDANGERING ITS ACCEPTABILITY IN PANAMA. TORRIJOS
TOLD THE SENATORS THAT INCORPORATION OF THE OCTOBER 14

TORRIJOS-CARTER UNDERSTANDING WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO HIM, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER IT WERE AN UNDERSTANDING, RESERVATION OR AMENDMENT (THOUGH WE ARE NOT SURE HE UNDERSTANDS THE DISTINCTIONS). HE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT A NEW PLEBISCITE WOULD BE REQUIRED HERE, REGARDLESS OF HOW THE LANGUAGE OF THAT STATEMENT WERE INCORPORATED.

3. TORRIJOS ALSO TOLD THE SENATORS:

A. ELIMINATION OF PARA 2 OF ART. XII OF THE CANAL TREATY, ON THE SEA-LEVEL CANAL, WOULD MAKE TORRIJOS A "NATIONAL HERO".

B. PANAMA WOULD BE ASSIDUOUS IN MAINTAINING ITS CANAL ONCE IT IS RUNNING IT, AFTER 2000.

C. REPRESSIVE LAWS 341 AND 342 HAVE BEEN ABROGATED, AS PROMISED TO SENATOR BYRD. A NEW PRESS LAW IS IN ITS FINAL STAGES AND IS EXPECTED TO BE FINALLY APPROVED NEXT WEEK, PROBABLY TUESDAY.

D. THE CURRENT TREND TOWARD GREATER POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION WILL NOT BE STOPPED.

4. COMMENT: THERE WAS DISAGREEMENT AMONG THE SENATORS ON WHETHER THE OCTOBER 14 STATEMENT SHOULD BE INCORPORATED AS AN AMENDMENT OR A RESERVATION. HOWEVER, THEY SEEMED TO AGREE THAT THE COMMITTEE ITSELF SHOULD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RECOMMEND WHATEVER AMENDMENTS OR RESERVATIONS MIGHT BE NECESSARY FOR PASSAGE AND THEN FIGHT ANY ADDITIONAL CHANGES FROM THE FLOOR. THE ALTERNATIVE OF ALLOWING THE INCORPORATION OF THE CARTER-TORRIJOS STATEMENT ON THE FLOOR DID NOT APPEAL TO THE SENATORS.

5. FOR EXCERPTS OF CODEL SPARKMAN PRESS CONFERENCE SEE USINFO 182347Z JAN 78, SENT SECSTATE FOR ARA/PAN. JORDEN

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